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ABSTRACT

This document presents the vision of the West Virginia educational community in providing special education services to gifted and disabled students through the restructuring of schools. The approach was developed during a May 1991 meeting of special education leaders at which participants examined the major education reforms being discussed at the local, state, and national levels and the implications of the reforms for exceptional students. The report begins with a conceptual approach to mapping the state and local role in educating exceptional children, which calls for focusing on what outcomes are desired at the student level and then determining what has to happen at each successive level above the student level for those outcomes to be achieved. Meeting participants examined education reforms in three areas: curriculum/instruction, accountability, and governance. The report outlines reform principles in each of the three areas; outlines the actions needed at the national and state levels; discusses the potential positive and negative impact on gifted and disabled students; and analyzes the challenges for educators. (JDD)

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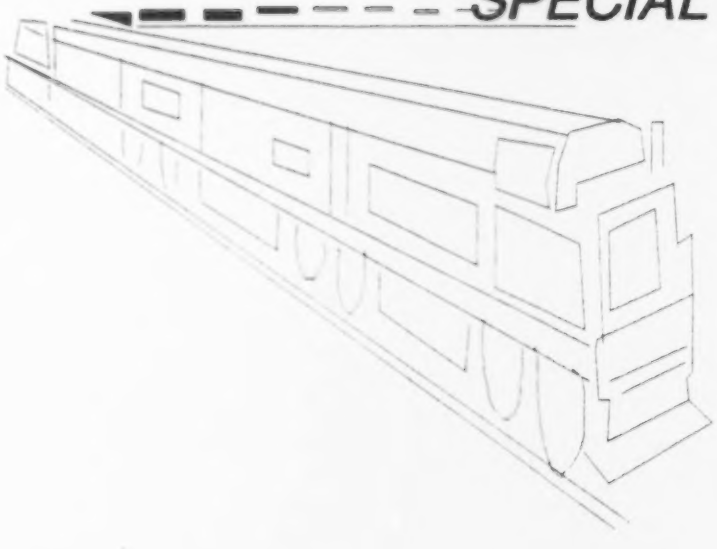
BUILDING OUR OWN RAILROAD TRACKS

EDUCATION REFORM AND SPECIAL EDUCATION



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WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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FOREWORD

In May, 1991, the West Virginia Department of Education, Office of Special Education, sponsored a two–day meeting for RESA administrators, county administrators of special education, representatives of higher education and other interested persons. At the workshop, the participants examined the major education reforms being discussed at the local, state and national levels. These reforms were clustered into three areas – curriculum/instruction, accountability and governance. The actions being taken under the three major clusters were organized according to the reform principles generally cited by policy makers and educators as a rationale for their reform actions. The action areas then formed the basis for discussion among the participants who were encouraged to articulate:

- the implications of the reform actions for exceptional students;
- ways the reform actions can be shaped at the local level to ensure meeting the needs of exceptional students;
- local leadership initiatives needed to help schools; and
- state leadership initiatives needed to help districts.

This document represents the vision established during this meeting by the special education leaders of West Virginia.

The purpose of the document is to establish the direction for the educational community in providing special education services through the restructuring of our schools.

Henry Marockie
State Superintendent of Schools

The West Virginia Department of Education, Office of Special Education appreciates the RESA special education administrators, the county administrators of special education, the representatives from higher education and others who attended the education reform meeting and assisted in the development of this document. A special recognition is extended to the following members of the Education Reform Study Team who so generously gave of their time, talent and efforts:

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The members of the Study Team acknowledge the use of State Policy Issues in the Education of Gifted and Talented Students by Patricia Bruce-Mitchell. Her paper provided the basis for the Education Reform Workshop materials and became a basis for this document.

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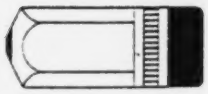
I. INTRODUCTION



A. CONCEPTUAL APPROACH TO MAPPING THE STATE AND LOCAL ROLE IN EDUCATING EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

In order to discuss the ideal parameters of a state-local partnership for exceptional students, we must first determine the desired outcomes for such a partnership. Clearly, the overall goal for the partnership will be to improve the education of exceptional students, but the state and local leadership, working independently, cannot achieve such a goal.

For all of the power of policy and funding, neither the West Virginia Legislature, the West Virginia Board of Education, the West Virginia Department of Education, county boards nor county central office administrators can directly improve the education of a single exceptional student. Policy leaders can strengthen the capacity of districts and schools to create a caring, learning environment where successful interactions can occur between teachers and exceptional students. Leaders can create rewards and sanctions that strongly urge schools to provide such an environment, and they can raise the awareness of the public and of local decision-makers so that local support extends beyond the limitations of policies. But, the most important actors in meeting the needs of exceptional children are individual teachers, students and parents.

To achieve the outcomes we desire for exceptional students, we must focus on what we would like to see happen at the student level, then determine what has to happen at each successive level above the student level so that students achieve the desired outcomes. This approach, called backward mapping by Richard Elmore, differs from the usual policy analysis. Typically, policy analysis focuses on outlining ideal policies to be issued from the top of the pyramid assuming that regulation and compliance monitoring will ensure implementation throughout the system. Under a backward mapping approach, education leaders should concern themselves with the following questions:

- What would we like for each exceptional student to know and be able to do?
- What has to happen in the classroom and in communities to help students achieve the desired outcomes?

- What can the local school system do to increase the likelihood that teachers and the community do what is needed to help students achieve the desired outcomes?

- What can the state legislature, the state board of education and the state department of education do to increase the likelihood that local school systems do the things that will, in turn, help classrooms and communities?

B. SCHOOLS THAT WE SEEK

The principles of backward mapping can help us determine the ideal parameters of a new partnership for exceptional students. We should begin with the first step of the process - defining the desired outcomes for exceptional students. These desired outcomes must be flexible, considering the vast span of abilities represented in the population of the exceptional students. In spite of the variance, we need some commonly held idea of what gifted and disabled students should know and be able to do.

At this time, parameters of a state-local partnership will have to be based upon a backward mapping that starts with what we think needs to happen one step up in the system - in classrooms and communities. Given what we know about exceptional students, we can sketch a vision of a school and community environment in which the needs of the each gifted and disabled student could be met.

In the schools we seek, all children, from the less able to the most highly able, experience challenging work that engages and instructs so that children learn to use their minds well. All children, from the less able to the most highly able, move along at their own pace. Each feels that the adults around them expect success and will watch them closely to ensure success. The rich curriculum provides a center for, not the boundaries of, instruction. Teachers assume that adaptations and extensions will be needed for all children, based on their learning style, rate and level. Teachers have the capability and resources to provide those adaptations and extensions.

In the schools we seek, children whose learning abilities are markedly different receive the special attention of all educators, and are not the sole responsibility of special educators. Teachers and administrators with

special expertise assist their colleagues in meeting diverse students' needs. The classroom organization and instructional strategies are designed for diversity. When the diversity is extreme, the school faculty, with advice from specialists, are inventive with arrangements and programs that match community and school resources with unique strengths and needs. All of the faculty who work with any exceptional student can articulate that student's unique strengths and needs, and they can also describe how they are adapting and extending the curriculum based on those strengths and needs.

In the schools we seek, highly able students and less able students do not compete for resources. Achieving success for all students is not equated with achieving the same results. Faculty and administrators understand that the differences in abilities among students varies widely. They work to bring the community into the education of all children, but a special effort is made to draw the community toward children whose differences in ability require additional resources and support. Thus, the community sees education of the most and least able as a challenge to be met, not as a problem that syphons-off resources.

In the schools we seek, there is a continuum of instructional adaptations and extensions because the faculty acknowledges that intensity of need increases as students' abilities correspond with higher points on the continuum. In short, the school stretches to meet all students at their level. It does not instruct them toward a pre-set mean based on age or normative standards.

In the schools we seek, unusual abilities are not seen by students or teachers as being an embarrassment or a liability. By developing the potential of all, the school encourages students to recognize the value of achievement. By celebrating the accomplishments of all, the school models its rhetoric of academic excellence.

There are elements of the schools we seek in West Virginia Schools that exist today. Schools reaching for the goals of the restructuring movement are providing a glimpse of what schools can become. For the first time in decades, we can hope to create schools that will truly address the full range of students' abilities without a dizzying array of segregated, special services. The opportunity exists, but the reality eludes us yet. Thus, the goal of the partnership must be to shape fundamental reforms being sought at all levels of the system.

C. THE REFORM AGENDA IN WEST VIRGINIA

In May, 1991, the West Virginia Department of Education, Office of Special Education, sponsored a two-day meeting for county administrators of special education, representatives of higher education and other interested persons. At the workshop, the participants examined the major education reforms being discussed at the local, state and national levels. These reforms were clustered into three areas: (1) curriculum/instruction, (2) accountability, and (3) governance. The actions being taken under the three major areas were organized according to reform principles generally cited by policy makers and educators as a rationale for their reform actions. The action areas then formed the basis for discussion among the participants who were encouraged to articulate:

- the implications of the reform actions for exceptional students;
- ways the reform actions can be shaped at the local level to ensure that the needs of exceptional students are met;
- local leadership initiatives needed to help schools;
- state leadership initiatives needed to help districts.

The following sections outline the potential impact of the reform actions on gifted and disabled students and the challenges for educators.

II. SHAPING THE REFORM AGENDA IN EDUCATION

AREA 1: Reforms Focusing on Curriculum and Instruction

Reform Principle A: The goal of schools is helping <u>all</u> students to use their minds well, to master in-depth subject matter versus acquiring discrete bits of knowledge.

<u>NATIONAL</u>

- Reducing the emphasis on sports.
- Requiring students to meet academic standards to participate in extracurricular activities.
- Creating curricular frameworks that go beyond basic skills for all students.
- Increasing the emphasis on importance of developing higher order thinking skills in all students.
- Expanding inter-disciplinary instruction.
- Shifting the nature and content of student assessment measures

<u>STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION GOALS</u>

- Students will become competent in the skills of reading, writing, and mathematics through technology and other approaches. (2.1)
- Adult basic education, continuing education and other programs will encourage life-long learning. (5.4)

<u>STATE LAWS</u>

- Changes in social studies curriculum to afford the opportunities for high school students to register to vote. (18-2-9)
- Provide for the development of a child abuse parenting curriculum. (61-8)
- Provides for a statewide curriculum, technology resource center. (18-2-20)

- Provide for a pay raise for personnel who hold an in-field masters (18A-4-1).

- Establishes West Virginia's educational goals for the year 2000 (18-1-4).

POTENTIAL IMPACT ON EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS

Positive Impact

- A reduced emphasis on sports will allow redirection of funds to academic programs including funds for exceptional children.

- Higher order thinking skills for all students will produce a THINKING community that will value education.

- When all parts of the curriculum and instruction provide mind-stretching work for all students, the discrepancy between what exceptional students need and the general program will be reduced. Since most special education provides special instruction only a fraction of the school week, it is essential that the general curriculum and instruction be more engaging to all learners.

- Another benefit of the emphasis on higher order thinking skills and inter-disciplinary instruction will be the additional research and teaching materials produced. This will improve the resources educators have for adapting the curriculum and instruction for exceptional students.

- Life long learning creates a better community environment for exceptional learners by providing needed learning support systems after high school graduation.

Negative impact:

- The "C" Rule causes pressures for more restrictive settings so that the IEP will prevent marginal students from making "D"s and therefore can participate in sports and other extra-curricular activities.

- The introduction of higher order thinking skills in the general curriculum may create a false sense of meeting the needs of our exceptional students.

- West Virginia's drive to increase the number of credits required for graduation has negative impact on all exceptional students by increasing the rigidity of the

system and changing quantity, not quality, of instruction.

Challenges

- Special education personnel who have been trained to help all students use their minds well will have to make paradigm shifts and team with others in developing and modifying programs.

- Many educators in special education, especially gifted education, have extensive training and experience in instructional techniques that help students to learn to use their mind well and to teach students how to learn. General education should tap the talents that exist among special education personnel to help all teachers develop or improve their capabilities to develop students' higher order thinking skills. General education will also benefit from the lessons learned in gifted education regarding effective and ineffective ways to help students develop critical thinking skills.

- State and county leaders must identify rich curriculums and disseminate and make them available. In restructuring the traditional curriculum, general and special educators must take care not to devise another rigid system.

- Policies that detail competencies to be acquired by certain age levels are almost always implemented too literally and in a highly fragmented fashion. "Higher Order Thinking Skills" is not a subject. Learning to use one's mind well is not accomplished through the completion of a sequential checklist of competencies. Our current "inch-deep and mile-wide curriculum of factlets" does not serve any student well. However, special education students with their unique learning ability must have the opportunity for continuous progress through a rich curriculum that stresses connections and applications. The expertise of personnel, such as teachers of the gifted who are already trained in higher order thinking skills and teaching strategies, should be utilized.

- The State Board has committed itself to equipping "our schools with technology" as a strategy for change. The use of this technology must also provide for the unique needs of exceptional children to use their minds well.

Reform Principle B: Students should be the workers in a school. Teachers should be coaches who stimulate students to learn.

NATIONAL

- Emphasizing student-centered instructional techniques.
- Encouraging cooperative learning groups.
- Emphasizing more sophisticated questioning techniques for teachers.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

- Teaching personnel will develop specific skills for maintaining and communicating high expectations for students. (4.2)
- School personnel will be encouraged to increase their subject area knowledge. (4.3)

STATE LAWS

- "Shares" (Educational Incentives) in Education for Students (HB 2512)

Positive Impact

- Changing the role of students in schools from being seen as "products" to becoming the workers should lead to education that helps each child stretch her/his abilities. A challenging learning environment will provide opportunities for potential ability to emerge and demonstrated achievement to shine. Gifted students will not have to hold back or hide their intellectual interests because the norm of the schools will encourage achievement. Students with disabilities will not be viewed as an inferior "raw material", but as a valued worker with a different capacity to work. Given the changing demographics of the U.S. with fewer young people available for the labor force, even with the factory model, defective products can no longer be thrown away when there is a scarcity of materials. The zero reject concept mandated by PL 94-142 (EHA) reauthorized by 101-476 (IDEA) is becoming an economic necessity. We can no longer waste a portion of our children.
- Special educators have expertise in systems change and student-centered instructional techniques, including posing questions. Their expertise should be tapped by

general educators to help spread the use of these techniques for all students

Negative Impact

- If cooperative learning strategies are interpreted too literally, special education students can be harmed and another rigid system can develop. (i.e., Cooperative learning groups of 1 high, 1 low and 3 middle is not always beneficial to exceptional students.)

- Not all teachers have sufficient knowledge, skills or abilities to effectively structure cooperative learning situations. Cooperative learning strategies in the hands of an unskilled teacher can be highly detrimental to the exceptional learner. At best, their pace and level of work can be inappropriately controlled. The potential for exploitation of the most able student exists when they are placed in poorly structured cooperative task groups.

- Special education was created and expanded because of the inability of general education to adapt its curriculum and instruction for students at the extremes of the learning curve. Once general education perceives it is doing a reasonable job of teaching more diverse students, they are likely to question the need for special education and will want special funds for the programs to be "returned" to general education.

- Special educators may not be ready to defend the need for special programs as shifts occur in general education. Too many special education programs have been sold as providing "special subjects" not covered in the general curriculum. The rationale for special education programs must be that the exceptional students' abilities requires extension and adaptations of the usual curriculum and instruction based on the needs of the individual student.

- More effective instruction may increase the diversity by permitting students to learn and grow based upon the students' levels of abilities rather than in accordance with a lock-step factory assembly model.

Challenges

- As all teachers are trained in more effective instructional strategies, they will need to develop a greater understanding of the needs of exceptional

students and a commitment to addressing those needs. They cannot assume that new instructional strategies will automatically "take care of" exceptional students. Training needs to include diagnostic and prescriptive teaching experiences. The deficit/norm-referenced model of students' abilities will be replaced by a strength or "J" curve model. Training will be needed to facilitate a strength based IEP process becoming an effective tool for educational planning.

Reform Principle C: Schools should be structured to create a learning, caring environment that focuses on attaining the curricular goal ==> helping all students to use their minds well. Instruction should be personalized to meet the needs of every group of students and paced according to individual student needs.

NATIONAL

- Increasing support for the "Middle School Movement."
- Organizing ungraded primary schools.
- Reorganizing school structures to create "houses", "families", "wings" or similar clusters of students and teachers.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

- Students who are unable to read, write and solve mathematical problems at grade level will receive pre-teach, teach, reteach practices. (2.3)
- Students working beyond the regular classroom instruction level will receive expanded learning opportunities.
- Children at risk of academic failure will receive early identification and sustained intervention services. (2.6)
- Vocational, technical and adult education programs will focus on employability skills, computer literacy and academic performance in basic skills. (7.2)

STATE LAWS

- Compensatory and remedial instruction based upon WV-Step results is required. (18-2E-3)
- Developmental screening required. (5-17)

- Multiple early childhood education program options to meet needs of students are required. (18-5-18C)

- Establish guidelines, then pilot schools, for semester-based kindergarten and elementary schools. (18-5-40)

- Honors and advanced placement programs for secondary students. (18-2E-3A)

- Creates a WV advanced placement center. (18-3A-5)

- Placement Advisory Committees for gifted students 9-12 or for 8th grade gifted students. (18-2E-3B)

- Provision of Technology for Basic Skills and Remediation Instruction. (18-2E-7)

- Redefinition of Gifted Education--Excludes K and 9-12; Defines "Exceptional Gifted" Grades 9-12. (HB 2326)

- Provision of Information, RE: Vocational Transition and The Programs for Handicapped Students. (18-5-13)

- (New) Expansion of Mandatory Preschool and Handicapped Programs (includes mild and moderate). (18-20-1B)

- Transition to K-4 Developmental Programs. (18-2-5)

Positive Impact

- Individualizing instruction will be highly beneficial to exceptional students. The basic philosophy of "instruction should be personalized to meet the needs of the individual student" is consistent with special education philosophy. As general education shifts away from the current assembly-line model to an individualized, student-centered approach, the needs of children will be addressed in all classrooms. The changes will increase placement options in general education for exceptional students and special education programs will shift to a support role for general educators with direct student services reserved for special cases.

- Exceptional students have experienced alienation in schools. They will benefit from schools committed to being caring, learning environments for all students. The emphasis on individualization will decrease labeling of students, lessen the impact of being different and eliminate the dual system of education for exceptional learners.

- The entire school will be responsible for an integrated system with responsible learning.
- The change will help meet the social needs of all students as well as their academic needs.
- The system can maximize existing resources.
- The ungraded primary allows for flexible pacing for all children.

Negative Impact

- Individualized instruction is an ideal which is often discussed and infrequently practiced. The education system may not have the financial commitment to translate their rhetoric for individualized instruction into the time and training requirement. Most teachers will need training in student assessment and in utilizing an eclectic mix of instructional strategies. Individualized versus large group instruction will require reduced student/teacher ratios and more planning time.
- As with other reforms, there is a danger that schools will make some adjustments in the general education program and prematurely determine that they no longer need special education programs. Ungraded systems will not necessarily translate into instructional change. Educators may mistakenly assume that the ungraded primary allows for enough movement for gifted learners or meets the needs of all students with disabilities. General education may decide that the funds used for special education would be better spent trying to individualize instruction for all students so that they will no longer need special education programs.
- Creating caring, learning environments for all students means that the school must care about the bright students, as well as the slower students. Ingrained, dysfunctional school norms which promote anti-intellectualism and that pressure students toward uniformity must be reversed. Restructuring schools to create a close-knit community, without making deliberate changes in school norms, will only strengthen the effects of those norms on the student. If this concern is not addressed, creating "nurturing" groups within schools will not meet the needs of the exceptional.
- Current categorical funding and certification patterns will act as a barrier.

Challenges

- Policy makers and educators have demonstrated narrow-minded thinking for decades. The "idea of the month" mentality, coupled with a strong tendency toward over-reaction has created an endless series of discrete programs touted as systemic change. An educational system that works for all students will have to cease its tradition of trading-off resources where the needs of one group of students, with high or low ability, are made at the expense of other students.

- Parents and educators of exceptional students will have to change their advocacy strategies. Their focus should remain student centered and not toward legal safety. They must promote systematic change in the schools that will ensure that the needs of all children are met. Change strategies will need to consider the needs of students, teachers, administrators and outside stakeholders.

- Special education staff have knowledge and experience to become leaders in the reform movement. They will need to undergo a conceptual shift and to be trainers and technical assistance people as well as teachers. Training of all educators will need to incorporate an expanded array of teaching methodologies, including the training of principals in site-based management of programs for exceptional children and the training of faculty senates as their duties pertain to special education.

Reform Principle D: All students, including those from racial, ethnic or socioeconomic groups which traditionally have been less successful in schools, can and will learn to use their minds well.

NATIONAL

- Eliminating tracking.

- Grouping students with heterogenous abilities.

- Questioning of "general education" track in high school and of quality of academic instruction in vocational programs.

- Recruiting minority teachers.

- Using newer technologies - video discs and micro-computers - to provide the stimulation, patience and persistence needed to help learning impaired and at-risk students, as well as provide opportunities for "self-paced learning" needed by other students.

STATE LAWS

- Compulsory Attendance (Age and Truancy Procedures/Penalties). (18-8-1A,2,4,5,&5A)

- Compulsory School-Age Changed to Conform with other Sections of Code (See Above). (18-8-1A)

Positive Impact

- Gifted and students with disabilities are often trapped in tracking systems. Teacher nominations and grades, (both over-used evaluation techniques), yield both false "positives" and false "negatives".

- High ability and low ability students will benefit from elimination of tracking whereby the learning capacity of children is appraised early in their school career and then the results of that one-time appraisal guides instructional decisions for years. Distinctions among the cultures that are associated with vocational education, academic education, and special education will be lessened.

- Greater flexibility in moving students in and out of special education programs will enable educators to focus their resources on services to children. Some districts expend too many resources ensuring that the right students are selected in comparison to the resources spent providing special programs. The process needs to move from a labeling/placement mentality to a service/needs program.

Negative Impact

- Some schools confuse tracking and ability grouping and eliminate any instructional grouping that places "like ability" students together. The misguided belief that heterogenous grouping is best for all students has led some schools to eliminate a variety of opportunities. Other schools have decided that any adaptation for exceptional learners must take place in the regular classroom, but have failed to provide teachers with the

training, student caseload or time they need to meet special learning needs.

- Research indicates the benefits of grouping gifted students for instruction. However, research also demonstrates negative effects of grouping for low ability students.

Challenges

- The same challenge of shaping the reforms outlined above exist for reforms that attempt to provide a demanding education for all students. The complexity and diversity of student's needs must be understood by all educators. One group cannot be ignored just because attention is turned to another group. When policy makers and educators set a goal that all students will be successful, they must stick to their commitment to all students.

Reform Principle E: The key to a successful education system is talented personnel who have the knowledge, skills and time to create and sustain effective schools.

NATIONAL

- Focusing on improving quality of persons entering the profession: higher admission standards and/or tests to enter professional preparation programs; tests to receive initial certification; beginning teacher support programs; beginning teacher evaluation; and higher starting salaries.

- Creating "Alternative Routes" to certification to get competent individuals into education without having to complete the usual professional preparation programs or fulfill all of the state standards for certification.

- Increasing incentives for teachers to achieve "mastery" status as professionals by: setting standards for mastery (National Board for Professional Teacher Standards); creating different roles for master teachers (mentor teachers, career ladders); providing additional pay for achieving mastery; and increasing the quality of professional development opportunities.

- Shifting the focus exclusively on the qualifications of teachers to others "up the hierarchy" such as principals, superintendents, staff in state education agencies.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

- Curriculum and instructional practices will help students learn to think critically. (2.5)

STATE LAWS

- School Attendance (Drop-Outs) (17B-2-3&5) and Driver's License. (17B-3-6)

Positive Impact

- Increasing the salaries, along with more rigorous standards for entry into the profession, will raise the caliber of persons choosing teaching for a career. Alternative routes for earning a teaching certification will enable a talented person to shift from other careers into teaching. Professional training opportunities that develop the skills of practicing teachers from the novice level through the proficient level will improve the quality of teaching.

- The movement away from the "egg crate" school where each teacher was isolated in her/his classroom will also benefit the exceptional student. As collegial sharing becomes the norm, special educators will find it easier to help general educators adapt and extend their instructional techniques to better teach all students. Similarly, general educators will be able to work with special educators in designing special services which are integrated with instruction being provided in the regular classroom. Collegial sharing will also facilitate instructional planning across grades and subjects, so that the long-sought "comprehensive, articulated services" become a reality.

Negative Impact

- Although certification and evaluation standards for teachers have been raised, there is no indication that the standards are designed to assess the knowledge, skills and abilities needed by teachers to implement curriculum and instruction reforms aimed at developing the capacity of all children to learn to use their minds well. The education system may talk about the need to focus on outcomes, but means are still confused with ends. More pre-service courses, more entry tests, more observational evaluations of teachers will not ensure that teachers have the curriculum and their instructional techniques to ensure that all students are successful. Quality of teaching is the goal. Stricter certification

requirements are just one of several strategies for achieving the goal.

- The misplaced emphasis on raising certification requirements has also affected special education. The increasing number of courses required for certification as a special education teacher may improve the knowledge of those earning the certificate, but it perpetuates the fragmentation that exists in education. Teachers see students as "your kids" and "my kids" and "I'm not trained to do anything for those kids." The resulting problem is that no one is fully responsible for special education students. Specialists are only supposed to have the training to meet the special education students' needs, but they only see the students for a few hours a week. Regular teachers teach some or all the basic subjects to the special education students, but are not expected to fully adapt the curriculum and instruction because they have not received special training.

Challenges

- For at least fifteen years, special education leaders have talked about the importance of training regular classroom teachers to help meet the special needs of exceptional students. The increased resources available for special education programs have been expended to train and hire more special education teachers. There is a growing movement to restructure education and pull the fragmented pieces back together into a new paradigm of schooling.

- Special education leaders need to advocate the shifting of some of the special education resources to linking general education with special education. The leaders also should strive to shape the new standards being set for general educators, especially the emerging indicators of proficiency or expert teaching, to ensure that the definition of mastery includes ability to adapt instruction for exceptional children.

AREA 2: Reforms Focusing On Accountability

Reform Principle A: Policy makers, educators, parents and the public need to know how well schools are providing quality education to all their students and producing desired outcomes.

NATIONAL

- Shifting from using paper and pencil and multiple-choice tests as the predominate way of depicting student achievement to alternative forms of assessment.
- Shifting from norm-referenced assessment to performance assessments.
- Shifting from using student achievement test results as the predominant measure of the performance of the education system to a broader group of indicators.
- Increasing the reporting of performance of students, schools and districts to policy makers, parents and the public such as School/District "Profiles" or "Report Cards" and annual state reports on education given to legislatures.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

- Curriculum and instructional practices will be arranged so that students will be able to read, write, and solve mathematical problems at grade level by the end of Grade 4. (2.2)
- Students will be tested at the high school level to ensure that they have the competencies needed for the work force or college. (2.7)
- Students graduating from high school will receive a warranty guaranteeing additional training, if necessary, so that they may successfully compete in the work place. (2.8)

STATE LAWS

- Standardized Reporting of Data for "Report Cards". (18-2E-4)
- School accreditation: changes focus on school accountability. (18-2E-5)

- Certificates of proficiency and warranty. (18-2-6&6D)
- standardized testing requirements for exemption K schools. (18-28-1)
- Alternative assessment measures for special education students being schooled at home. (18-8-1)
- Additional reference for school accreditation. (SB 1)
- Establishes 95% compliance standard for school accreditation. (HB 2467)

Positive Impact

- Changes in student assessment provide a positive lever to value and teach complex skills. The deposing of norm-referenced, standardized tests as the measure of student achievement is likely to have a highly positive impact on exceptional students. Richer measures of cognitive abilities will be better for developing educational programs. The shift in assessment will also trigger systemic change in curriculum and instruction through the general education program. Changes such as performance assessments to measure IEP objectives and pre/post testing of all students on subject matter to determine gains will provide increased accountability.
- The emphasis on public reporting of student assessment information should help improve public awareness and involvement in schools. In some districts, current "school profiles/report cards" are seen as public relations tools, and any information related to school problems or shortcomings is omitted. Hopefully, schools will begin to utilize their public report cards as a tool to educate the public on the inadequacy of the current educational system, and the need for major changes to adapt to changes in our nation's work force and population. Public reports on the schools should also move away from the numerical indicators which focus on describing the "average performer". The public needs to understand the diversity of students and learning styles and levels, while being convinced that success for all is in their best interest.
- If school profiles/report cards are used as tools to educate, not placate, the public, then advocates for the exceptional will benefit. Public understanding of the diversity of students should engender a mood of support for exceptional students

Negative Impact

- Alternative assessment must remain fundamentally distinct from traditional assessment methods. The potential exists for any type of assessment to degenerate into norm-referenced, numerically-reported measures which do not serve students or educators well. For example, student portfolios which permit a highly individualized evaluation with an "unlimited ceiling" in assessing student performance, would make them ideal for gifted students. Pioneer schools in alternative assessment report that the greatest value of some of the new approaches is not the outcome, but the process. For example, the process of a teacher and a student selecting which pieces will be placed in a portfolio provides a rare opportunity for student's self-evaluation and individualized feedback.

- However, if portfolios are judged according to narrowly-focused criteria and the judgment reduced to whether or not a pre-set standard has been met, then the unique strength of portfolios as an alternative assessment will be lost.

- School profiles and report cards can be used to punish instead of improve. Decision makers who set the standards are also accountable for providing matching resources. Statewide assessments may reduce the diversity of programming, since "what gets measured gets done". The reductionist tendency of the public media will tend to pressure communicators into simplifying complex data and concepts into three minute sound bites and short news articles.

Challenges

- Special education leaders would be wise to invest heavily in influencing the development of alternative assessment methods. This reform area is still in the very early stages of development, but the potential for major change is great for two reasons. First, policy makers are beginning to be very interested in alternative assessment. Second, using more complex and authentic measures of student performance will undoubtedly trigger a series of events that will ultimately transform schooling. Being present as the measures are developed and policies deliberated will enable special educators to ensure that alternative assessment will also serve the needs of exceptional students. This golden opportunity

to bring exceptional students into the conscience of the entire system should not be ignored or overlooked.

- Information concerning special education should be included on West Virginia School Report Cards. West Virginia's student warranty must not be discriminatory toward students with disabilities and must be effectively linked to a student's IEP.

- Local districts create and disseminate profiles that compare performance to established criteria and not to other districts.

Reform Principle B: The purpose of assessment should be to help improve education.

NATIONAL

- Changing student assessment measures to reflect growing community support for student mastery of complex skills and knowledge.

- Increasing acceptance of teacher assessment and school-site assessment as a valid approach to measuring student progress.

- Collecting and analyzing data by school site so that the data can be used for school improvement efforts.

- Utilizing assessment data to reward high performing schools/districts in order to create incentives for others to improve.

- Utilizing assessment data to target additional assistance and resources to low performing school/districts.

- Utilizing assessment data to apply sanctions to low performing schools/districts in order to create disincentives for low performance.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

- Decisions by teachers, principals, and administrators will be improved through access to current student data in a statewide, computerized information system. (2.9)

- Personnel evaluation policies will promote personnel competency. (4.4)

STATE LAW

- WV-Step (Including Higher Level Cognitive Thinking for All Students). (18-2E-2 & 18-3-2)

- Schools of Excellence. (18-2F-1)

Positive Impact

- Developing the capacity of teachers and schools to assess the abilities of their students is beneficial to exceptional students. As teachers gain experience in assessing complex skills, they have a valuable tool to use in evaluating the effectiveness of their teaching on students and in helping students evaluate their own performance.

- If the criteria used to judge high-performing and low-performing schools includes appropriate indicators on the performance of gifted and students with disabilities, then special educators may have compelling evidence to direct schools to address the needs of ALL students.

Negative Impact

- The accelerating interest in assessment and evaluation presents a major problem to special education. Decision makers are posing tough questions and they want to see tangible results for their investment. Under the current system, the accepted measures of effectiveness have to do with effort expended and the process completed.

- Special education can satisfactorily answer traditional evaluation questions by citing increases in the number of students served, the number of districts/schools providing special education programs and other input indicators. As the evaluation system shifts to outcomes, special educators will have to be able to talk about progress in reaching desired outcomes. Policy makers and educators have not defined desired outcomes for exceptional students.

- If West Virginia is serious about moving into a phase of developing district capacity to meet desired outcomes, major resources will have to be invested in helping low-performing districts/schools. Given the economic projections for revenues, increased expenditures in one area will have to be compensated by decreased expenditures in others. Categorical programs are likely to be prime targets for expenditure reductions.

Challenges

- At present, the unstated goals of many special education programs are to compensate for the inadequacies of the general education program. Others would infer that the goal of special education is to provide for the unique learning abilities of exceptional students. Learners in special education must begin to develop a common vision of the desired student outcomes.

- Many will argue that common goals for exceptional students are not possible given the diversity of needs and abilities within the populations. Early efforts in the goal-setting and tracking process will probably seem inappropriate or even misguided. But goals are needed to build a constructive rationale and a frame for programs.

- Once consensus is reached concerning expected results from special education programs, both those in the regular classrooms and those provided in special settings, educators will need to develop measures and tracking systems for reaching goals.

AREA 3: Reforms Focusing on Governance

Reform Principle A: Parents should be partners in the education of their children.

NATIONAL

- Creating/supporting parent education programs.
- Empowering parents to be decision makers for schools (e.g., the Chicago School Committees).
- Empowering parents to choose the schools their child will attend (Milwaukee Vouchers and other "Choice" programs).

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

- School and county programs will involve members of the community as active partners in the education process. (5.1)

STATE LAWS

- AIDS Education and Parent Approval. (18-2-9)
- Involvement of Community Schools. (18-5A-1)
- Local School Improvement Councils. (18-5A-2,3)
- Schools of Excellence (Parents Included on Decision Committee). (18-5A-4)

Positive Impact

- Certain special education programs become more popular as the states and districts adopt choice plans. Schools may create or expand special programs to entice parents to choose their school.
- Parents of exceptional students are among the most active and vocal parents in schools and have experience in educational decision making through the IEP process. As parents are given a greater advisory or decision-making role in schools, the parents of exceptional children may be in a better position to advocate for the needs of exceptional students.

Negative Impact

- The separatist image of some special education programs may create problems if parents brought into the advisory and decision-making circles do not understand the

rationale for special education programs. Each parent wants a rich and appropriate education that develops their child's unique abilities. Parents find it difficult to support giving individualized education to a select few.

Challenges

- Educators and parents of exceptional students can make an unique contribution to parent education programs. Most special educators have an extensive set of special skills and experiences. Many of these ideas can be adapted to create home projects for parents and children to work on together. In West Virginia, existing parent resource centers may be expanded to provide increased resources for parent-school partnerships.

- As schools strive to bring parents into the advisory and/or decision-making circles, they should ensure that those parents understand the diverse needs of students. Parents, like policy makers, tend to draw from their own experiences when making judgments about best educational practices. Educators have a responsibility to make sure that parents can truly be partners by giving them the knowledge to make informed decisions.

Reform Principle B: Decisions regarding the desired outcomes of the education system should be made at the state level, but decisions as how to achieve those goals should be made by those closest to the students.

NATIONAL

- Shifting to site-based management for certain types of decisions.

- Increasing involvement of teachers in decision making at the school level.

- Questioning the effectiveness of state and local governance structures.

- Restructuring state education agencies.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

- Teachers will share in decision-making regarding the teaching-learning process. (4.5)

STATE LAWS

- K-4 curriculum teams. (18-2-6B)
- No state mandated time requirements for K-4. (18-2-7)
- School advisory council "waivers" from county policy. (18-2-28&29)
- Competitive grants for low performing schools (repealed or changed by HB 2326 to exemplary, innovative programs). (18-2-30)
- Cooperative agreements between contiguous LEAs for improvement of instruction. (18-5-13)
- LEAs can establish year round schools. (18-5-13)
- School-wide distribution of K-6 pupil-teacher ratios. (18-5-18A)
- Schools of excellence (state establishes standards). (18-5A-4)
- School improvement councils. (18-5A-4)
- Mandates increased participation of teachers in decision making. (18A-5-4)

Positive Impact

- If site-based management, such as faculty senates, and the involvement of teachers in making those decisions are successful, then the staff of schools will feel responsible for the success of all their students. If the staff within those schools have the commitment and abilities to address the needs of exceptional children, then one can envision that their decisions would keep the best interests of those students in mind.

Negative Impact

- Many special education programs have been district-operated programs with minimal involvement of general school administrators or faculty. District staff make the final decisions regarding which children are to be placed in the program. Frequently, itinerant teachers come to the school to provide the programs. Occasionally, the students are moved to another site to receive services. Any district program that by-passes schools should realize this approach can be perceived by

the schools as absolving them of any responsibility for meeting the needs of their special students. Such programs will be vulnerable when decision making is abruptly shifted to sites.

Challenges

- The boundaries that separate exceptional students from general education students in many schools must become less rigid. The sense of responsibility for the success of ALL students must be shared. Based on the experiences in some schools that have shifted to site-based management, special education pull-out programs that operate in isolation from the general program will not survive. Special educators must work with the rest of the school's staff to determine the best options for meeting the needs of exceptional students. Linking regular and special education was seen as a desired action in the past. Such a linkage will be critical in the future.

Reform Principle C: States must ensure that students in all regions of the state and in all schools receive the education guaranteed by the state constitution regardless of local fiscal resources.

NATIONAL

- Increasing state control of fiscal resources that are diverted to education.
- Changing school finance formulas to shift revenue bases and expenditures to achieve "standard" education for all students.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

- Each county's curricula will be reviewed to redress inequities among systems. (1.1)
- State funding will be provided for construction and/or renovation of school facilities. (6.1)

STATE LAWS

- Reappraisal. (11-1B-18) (11-1C-1)

- Regionalization of services (Expansion of RESA Services). (18-2-26)

- School Aid Formula: Net Enrollment expanded to include 1,000 adults, ratio of professional instructional personnel adjusted; special education cap of 16.2%, waiver of cap of service personnel; maximum ratios of professional educators and service personnel; increased funding to RESAs; increased allowance for other current expenses; increased grant monies from State Board of Education; incentives for professional and service personnel; incentives for administrative efficiency. (18-9A-1)

- Education of incarcerated youth. (18-20-5,7&8)

- Equity funding. (18-4-5)

- Department of Education's responsibility for school-aged incarcerated youth. (18-2-5; 18-5-15&18; 18-20-1)

- School Building Authority. (18-9A-21)

- Foundation allowances for professional educators and service personnel. (18-9A-4,5&5A)

- (New) salary equity. (18A-4-5D)

- Fair and adequate pay scale for teachers. (18-9A-1)

Positive Impact

- Resource-poor districts will receive more funds as West Virginia shifts funding systems to reduce the discrepancy in funding among districts. This should benefit exceptional students in poor districts, as the increase in funds may be used to provide more appropriate educational opportunities.

Negative Impact

- Many states are moving toward a set of standards that are guaranteed to be provided to all students. State finance formulas are being revised to insure levels of funding to districts so that they can meet the standard. The most recent court cases and state formulas are moving in the direction of the "Robin Hood" principle whereby rich districts must give their money to poor districts so that their pupil expenditures are roughly equal.

- West Virginia must define its standards to include special education and related services or else those services will not be supported through the formula. Furthermore, districts which formerly had the local resources to provide non-mandated programs may be forced to turn their local revenues back to the state as part of funding equalization.

Challenges

- Special educators in more affluent districts must recognize the changes pushing their way through state finance formulas. It is essential that they improve advocacy efforts on behalf of exceptional students with state legislatures and state boards of education so that state standards address the needs of ALL children.

Reform Principle D: Schools must be a partner with other agencies to address comprehensive needs of children.

NATIONAL

- Expanding view of what is needed to enable student achievement and, hence, the need for a broader role for schools.

- Increasing concern about coordinated service delivery from various government agencies.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

- School-business partnership activities will be collaborative and help both schools and businesses achieve their specific goals. (5.2)

- Community and state partnerships will address health issues affecting students. (5.3)

- Cooperative efforts with the Governor's Office of Community and Industrial Development, other public agencies and the private sector will prepare students for the state's changing work place. 7.1

- Education services to business and industry will be increased. (7.3)

STATE LAWS

- Use of school facilities for child care programs. (18-5-26)

- Reorganization of higher education and vocational education. SB 420
- (NEW) Medicaid eligible children. (18-2-5B)
- Reduced maximum age for enrolling and serving students in special education to age 21. (18-20-1)
- Governor's Cabinet on Children and Families. (5-26-1)

Educational reform in West Virginia is envisioned to be inclusive of ALL students. This vision of restructuring our schools is articulated in the following statement prepared by Nancy Thabet, Director, Office of Special Education, West Virginia Office of Special Education.

> West Virginia has not differentiated between "general education reform" and "special education reform" but rather considers special education as one component of the system. Special education personnel have been involved in all aspects of the reform efforts including analysis of proposed legislation as well as parent and professional participation on committees to implement legislation through policy and procedures development. Prior to the passage of the reform legislation, eligibility criteria for students with disabilities and those who are gifted were strengthened to ensure least restrictive environment guarantees. School-Based Assistance Teams (SBAT) have been implemented as a strategy for reviewing problems, recommending interventions for the regular education classroom and evaluating the results of those interventions prior to referral for evaluation. State-wide training regarding collaborative consultation, cooperative learning and integrated education has been delivered. Currently, a state-wide plan for assuring full integrating opportunities for all children is being developed with input from parent and professionals representing both general and special educators. Additionally, training for administrators of special education programs has been developed to assure that local efforts for reform incorporate and include special education issues as an integrated piece of the whole.